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Observer of environmental norms in the drafting and implementation of agreements on disarmament and arms control

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

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Syrian Arab Republic

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In 2002 the Syrian Arab Republic, which is bound by the conventions on disarmament and related conventions, passed Act No. 50 of that year, which is aimed at the protection and preservation of the environment and the promotion of sustainable development and prohibits the entry and transit of radioactive and other hazardous materials and waste. Chapter 3, article 3, of Legislative Decree No. 64 of 2005, which relates to the security and safety of radioactive sources, provides that anyone who acquires a radiation source must take all measures to guarantee the safety of that source and the security and protection of individuals, the environment and property against the hazards of exposure to it. Article 7 of the said Act prohibits the introduction of depleted radioactive materials into Syrian territory in any form whatsoever for the purpose of their being stored, buried or disposed of. Moreover, chapter 4, article 13, of the said Act provides that the Atomic Energy Commission shall adopt appropriate measures and procedures for detecting cases of illegal trafficking or brokering in nuclear or radioactive materials. The Environment Act imposes harsh penalties for bringing in forbidden hazardous materials or hazardous or radioactive waste.

Main practical procedures followed

1. The Ministry of Local Administration and Environment makes an effort to request all owners of enterprises of various types in the Syrian Arab Republic (whether industrial, economic, agricultural, commercial or other) to submit studies on the assessment of any environmental impact of all operations to be carried out. Such studies will be considered a basis and a condition for future approvals for the start-up of implementation.

2. The Ministry of Local Administration and Environment has established a committee on chemicals and hazardous waste whose task is to study methods for dealing with them so as to ensure that no damage to elements of the environment occurs.

3. The Syrian environment and all border-crossing points are being checked radiometrically to detect any abnormalities resulting from either peaceful or military nuclear activities in neighbouring States.

4. The 2002 National Profile on Chemical Safety was issued for the safe handling of hazardous chemicals, including transport, storage and the disposal of waste, and the prevention of illegal traffic in hazardous substances and waste.

5. The Ministry of Local Administration and Environment has issued lists of wastes classified as hazardous whose import into or transit through the country is prohibited. The Ministry is now developing lists of chemicals whose importation is permitted subject to prior permission.

In the area of measures taken by the Syrian Arab Republic in respect of army and armed forces munitions, the munitions on hand in the Ordnance Directorate have no impact on the environment. They consist of regular, traditional ammunition

for light arms, artillery and tanks and expired (out-of-date) or useless munitions that are being destroyed by either dismantling or detonation, as follows:

(1) Dismantling is done in secure, fortified buildings prepared for that purpose, account being taken of all recommended environmental measures;

(2) Detonation, which is used for munitions that cannot be destroyed by dismantling, is carried out in open pits in uninhabited, non-agricultural areas of open desert far from grazing lands and nature preserves and does not affect natural and underground water sources. Such areas, which are protected and closed to persons not employed in them, are selected in coordination with ministries and competent public institutions, such as the Ministry of Irrigation, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Local Administration and Environment.

In this method of destruction, care is taken to ensure that the explosion results in the smallest possible quantity of residue. All the residue resulting from the operation of detonation is collected and buried in deep pits.

The Syrian Arab Republic reaffirms the need to eliminate weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons, and recalls its initiative presented to the Security Council on 29 December 2003 to transform the Middle East into a zone free of weapons of mass destruction. It also reaffirms the need to compel Israel, the sole State in the region that possesses an arsenal, and an enormous one, of nuclear weapons, to submit its facilities and research centres to strict surveillance, especially in the wake of its burial of hazardous poisonous and radioactive waste in the occupied Syrian Golan and the dangerous effects of this on the soil, climate, waters, health and psychological state of the population of the occupied Syrian Arab Golan, the symptoms of which have begun to manifest themselves in certain regions.